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CONSERVATISM IN EDUCATION.

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AN

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

American Institute of Instruction,

AT HARTFORD, CONN., AUGUST 20, 1862.

BY

SAMUEL ELIOT.

PRESIDENT OF TRINITY COLLEGE.

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CONSERVATISM IN EDUCATION.

It gives me great pleasure to meet the American Institute in Hartford. Although the particular institution with which I am connected, is closed for the summer holidays, and its members are scattered, so that they cannot unite with me in these words of greeting, I feel that I am speaking for them as well as myself in bidding you welcome. To the city in general, and to acquaintance with its citizens, you have already received a welcome from more fitting lips than mine. In a gathering like this, the whole community may well take pleasure; we look on with satisfaction, as the members of the Institute come among us to renew their intercourse with one another, to express their sympathies, to utter their counsels, and to bear their united testimonies to the magnitude of the cause to which they have pledged themselves. Nor, I may add, have they chosen an inappropriate spot for their assemblage. They find themselves surrounded by past associations as well as by present activities in the work of education. Within seven years after the settlement of this town,

and it may not have been for the first time that such an appropriation was made, thirty pounds, a very large sum for that period, were appropriated to the schools, and from that day to this, there runs the same silver thread through the Town Records, binding generation to generation in the same interests and the same sacrifices. What the schools of the present time are, and what the men who are engaged in them or in the other educational labors of the neighborhood, I may safely leave to you to discover during your sojourn, if you have not already discovered them. But I should be doing injustice to the city, as well as to my own feelings, if I did not advert, pointedly and gratefully, to the influence which the labors of one life, and that happily still in its prime, have shed not only here but elsewhere, making itself visible in generous exertions of various kinds, and now more especially identified with a Journal, worthily called the American, it might be styled the Universal, the most comprehensive of all periodicals devoted to Education.

In this presence, and the presence of so many active and successful leaders of education, it becomes me to be brief. It is but a small portion of your time that I shall occupy with some unpretending observations upon *Conservatism in Education*.

In education, as in almost every other respect, the characteristic of the Age is what is termed Improvement. Sensitive to the defects of systems, methods, and instruments, we undertake to reform them; we make one improvement here, another there; we

build improved school-houses, equip them with improved furniture and apparatus, provide them with improved text-books, and conduct them upon improved theories. Iago says he is "nothing, if not critical." The educator of to-day often acts upon much the same principle, criticises, alters or tries to alter, amends or tries to amend, as if everything with him were an open question, or rather as if it were decided that everything was susceptible of change, and of change for the better. Like the painter in one of the English parishes, who brought in his bill for "mending the Commandments, altering the Creed, and making a new Lord's Prayer," our educational reformers hold nothing to be beyond the reach of their adventurous spirit. Such a spirit easily runs to extremes; in fact it is an extreme itself. Improvement of this sort is but another name for Innovation, a process in which alteration is an essential part, but amendment not an essential one; by which things may be very much changed, indeed quite revolutionized, without being reformed. To put one's trust in innovations, whatever they may be termed, or however disguised, is to run a great risk to say the least; it is often to provoke certain disaster. Improvement respects the old as well as the new; it sees the good points as well as the bad ones in things as they are; and it preserves while it changes, as eagerly clinging to whatever is excellent in existing institutions as it willingly removes whatever is defective. But innovation, into which improvement will always degenerate, if it be made too

exclusive an object of exertion, scorns the strength as it does the weakness of the past ; it believes the past, indeed, to be in error, simply because it is the past, and hurls its glove at the feet of what it considers a corpse or an idiot, denouncing its corruptions and threatening it and them with annihilation. A course like this ends in annihilating itself. The progress it affects, so sweeping and so rapid, turns out to be a downward one, and when its descent is completed, it is in the midst of ruins. How much of the educational improvement of our times is actual improvement, and how much is mere innovation, cannot be accurately defined. Many of the changes that have been wrought, commend themselves at once and forever to our reason and our affections. Others are uncertain, and we wait to form a judgment regarding them, till time has applied its tests and brought out their real character. But there are some to be condemned without delay ; the longer they are tolerated, the deeper and the more lasting the injury of which they are capable.

Noah Webster, looking back from his old age upon his youth, said " that the instruction in schools was very imperfect in every branch, and," he adds, " if I am not misinformed, it is so to this day, in many branches. Indeed there is danger of running from one extreme to another, and, instead of having too few books in our schools, we shall have too many." " Spelling," says Dr. Humphrey, as he reviews his early experiences, " was one of the leading daily exercises in all the classes, and it was better a good

deal, I think, than it is now." My own experience disposes me to agree with Dr. Humphrey. To say nothing of what I have seen in colleges, I was once chairman of a school committee charged with the management of a High School. It was well thought of, and on many accounts deserved to be well thought of; it embraced a large range of studies, and many of them were successfully pursued. But when, at an examination of the school, the pupils were called upon to go through a simple exercise in reading and spelling, when they who had gone up into the sciences or foreign tongues, were recalled to the humbler rounds of their own language, it was as pitiable a display of ignorance as I had ever witnessed or desire to witness again. I regretted then, and still regret, having wounded any one's feelings by an act of mine, and yet I think I never did a better day's work for education, than when I joined with my colleagues on the committee in throwing the whole weight of our position against the neglect which we had discovered in regard to the old-fashioned branches of education. The improvement that would crowd these out in order to introduce Philosophies or Antiquities, is precisely what I should call an innovation, nothing less, nothing more. If, to make room for what are termed the higher studies, it is necessary to remove the so-called lower, it strikes one that the room is hardly worth the making, for, without the lower to support them, the higher must be insecure, and the more these are expanded, the larger the plan of the superstructure, the larger also and the more sub-

stantial must be the foundation. Lay this, and then the upper walls can be laid, all the loftier, all the more beautiful, all the surer to rise and still to rise, because they are symmetrical from their base.

Closely connected with the mistakes to which I have adverted, and, perhaps, as much as anything else at the bottom of them all, is the prevailing inclination to educational panaceas. "Do but adopt this method," says one theorist, "and education will come right; whatever its defects, they will be remedied; new things and old will take their proper places, and the world will be enlightened as it never was before." "Nay," says another, "you must resort to my theory; it, and it only, will correct the errors of the age." Here lies the great difficulty in the use of these comprehensive remedies; one contradicts the other, and which to choose, when both threaten equally fatal results in case they are not chosen, is a problem harder to solve than any in the highest mathematics. It reminds one of the harlequin who appeared on the stage with a parcel under each arm. "What have you under your right arm?" "Orders." "And what under your left arm?" "Counter-orders!"

There is another difficulty, and that is the ephemeral support which any one of these panaceas obtains. Each seems to be embraced, only to be abandoned; one leads to another, and that to another still, and so education advances by fits and starts, without a single fixed principle of progress. Panaceas are not real remedies, though they bear the name;

they are rather diseases requiring other remedies, and in nothing is this truer of them than in education, which has experienced far greater injury than benefit from the nostrums of the last half century. The wonder is that it has survived such treatment; that the vapor baths, movement cures, and vegetable discoveries to which it has been given over, have not entirely destroyed its constitution.

They are all wrong; of this there can be no question. If there is anything human that can be said to have fixed principles, it is surely Education. Its basis is the nature of man, physical, intellectual, and moral; and from this, in its various developments, springs, to this applies the whole educational system. Other than fixed principles may be proposed, and gather adherents; the less fixed, the more, perhaps, adhered to; but the enthusiasm which they excite is as fleeting as that of a school-boy's riot. We shall find on a little reflection, that much of the fancied improvements in education during our time, consists in the substitution of these unsteady theories for those steady ones which never ought to be tampered with, and which, however tampered with, always retain their inherent power, and soon put it forth again.]

Upon this fact, and it is nothing else than a fact, the conservative in education will insist. He will urge that the principles of education are not to be improved; that we cannot attempt to improve them without injuring them; that they are not of our creation, but depend upon the same laws that control our nature and our lives. He will insist that the prin-

ciples of education are immutable, and that all we have under our control is their application. This, he will allow, may be modified, it may be rendered wiser and more efficient, or it may be rendered the reverse ; even this, therefore, requiring the utmost discretion on the part of those who would meddle with it, or reform it. I should be disposed to go even further, and argue that the principles being fixed, their application does not admit of very large or frequent variations. Such as are called for by special circumstances, by different races or different ages, by different pursuits or characters, will of course be fully authorized ; but such as spring from changing theories as to the order, the subjects, the systems of study, such as are demanded to-day and forgotten to-morrow, such as caprice rather than prudence, and the love of change rather than the love of wisdom suggests, such as these cannot be considered desirable.

Let me mention one or two of the great principles to which I have referred, and inquire into the changes of which they and their applications are properly susceptible. It will be better than to confine ourselves to general and necessarily indefinite positions.

“The primary principle of education,” says Sir William Hamilton, “is the determination of the pupil to self-activity.” This is the principle, and its application, or one of its applications, instantly follows, viz : “the doing nothing for the pupil which he is able to do for himself.” Is it possible, I ask, to improve upon such a principle as this? Can it be enlarged? There it stands, in all the fulness of

which it is susceptible, "the determination to self-activity." Can it be reduced? can it be abandoned? Will anything less than self-activity, or anything else than this, suffice? The name may be altered; we need not be limited to Hamilton's phraseology; but can the reality, that which the name or the phrase denotes, can that be changed? I confess that I do not see how it can be. Unless a pupil is taught to act, and to act for himself, he is taught nothing, or nothing that can take the place of what he is not taught. It is on no other principle that education, on no other that life itself can be sustained. You dress an infant without expecting him to take part in the proceeding; but when he is a little older, you teach him to dress himself; and unless he learned the lesson, and could make his own toilet, you would think him in need of the assistance to be had at a school for the feeble-minded. So the child begins by being fed; but it is a very short time that passes before he can feed himself; and unless he becomes able to do so, our apprehensions for his soundness of mind or of body are excited, and reasonably excited. The difference in merely intellectual education is one of degree, not of kind. It is a slower process, but not the less a natural one, to bring a child to that point where he can teach himself, where he knows how to learn his lesson without constantly appealing for aid, and where, after learning his lesson, he can make use of it either in his studies or in other pursuits, according to its bearings. So much for the principle, on which I need not enlarge before those

already understanding and admitting it. As to its application, or recurring to Hamilton's expression, "the doing nothing for the pupil which he is able to do for himself," an expression open to all sorts of verbal alterations, it is by no means easy to see that the application itself can be substantially changed. There are extreme positions to take with regard to it. One may urge that the pupil is able to do very little for himself, and, therefore, that his labors should be lightened by never-failing assistance, that his way must be smoothed, and his studies be rendered as attractive as possible; while another insists that the pupil can do a great deal, in fact everything for himself, if he will, and consequently that his duties may be left to him to deal with as he may, no gloss upon them, no smoothing the path, no lessening the toil. But when we turn from either extreme, when we seek a theory, or rather a practice, that will commend itself to a moderate disposition, there is much less difficulty in finding what we seek than we may have anticipated. For the whole matter reduces itself at once within the limits of one question and its answer, — that is, what a pupil can do for himself; not what he ought to be able, if he were more gifted or more faithful, but what he is actually able to do, and if you succeed in this inquiry, you have succeeded in deciding the point before you. In other words, the application of the principle is determined, not by vague generalizations, but by definite circumstances, by the cases and characters of individuals, by the wants of pupils as they

present themselves, separately and repeatedly, by the relations established between them and their teacher, — in fine, by simple facts rather than by elaborate reasonings. To generate self-activity, there must be a distinct consideration for every pupil by himself; one needs more aid, another less from his teacher; one exerts all his powers, and with the greater vigor in proportion to the obstacles against which he has to contend; another is easily discouraged, lacks intellectual as well as moral stamina, and never does justice to his natural abilities, never puts forth the whole of the strength with which he has been endowed. Thus the application of the principle varies, but it does not change; it adapts itself to cases, but it is the same application of the same principle, and we may doubt whether the application can be changed to any greater advantage than the principle.

But though education consults the individual, it does not make him its centre or its circumference. What we may call the secondary principle of education is the determination of the pupil to an activity beyond himself, or in other words, to a consciousness of his relations with others, and of his share in the privileges and the responsibilities of the race. But for this principle, not only education, but every common interest of mankind would perish in a universal isolation; age would be separated from age, community from community, man from man; the accumulations of knowledge and civilization would be scattered, institutions would be broken up, and lives be

spent in divided and fruitless labors. Such a principle as this is no more to be altered than the principle of affinity or of gravitation. We must accept it, we must respect it, whether it suits our speculations or not, and the moment we set them up against it, they are shivered. It is upon this, as much as upon any principle, that the importance of general education rests. The more general it is, the more common, in the true sense of the word, that the schools of a people are, the more our pupils are brought to a sense of their common interests and their common obligations. I have often read with reverent admiration that passage in the Massachusetts Statutes which makes it "the duty of the President, Professors, and Tutors of the University at Cambridge, preceptors and teachers of academies, and all other instructors of youth, to take diligent care and to exert their best endeavors to impress on the minds of children and youth committed to their care and instruction, the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth, love to their country and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry, and frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance, and those other virtues which are the ornament of human society, and the basis upon which the republican constitution is structured." In no country more than in ours, is such a training required. The tendency to individuality has been far more marked among us than that to sympathy or to unity. Many educational theories have made their chief point the development of the individual, not in connection with

society, but in opposition to society, as if there were an antagonism that could not be reconciled between the interests of men collectively and those of men separately. Nowhere, moreover, is this principle of greater value than in a nation, the vast majority of whom are constantly exercising an influence, direct or indirect, upon the national destiny. "In proportion," declared Washington, "as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened." There you have precisely what is to be formed under the action of this secondary principle of education, a public opinion; not an opinion of the public, for that is another thing, but a public opinion, a common sentiment, a national standard, in contrast with that individual opinion, that private judgment, which, if carried to its logical conclusions, ends in ignorance and in anarchy. The application of this, like that of the primary principle, must vary according to circumstances, but there is no more need of sweeping reforms in this connection than in the other. Points of observation change, powers of action are different in different cases; yet it is not the application or the principle that is altered, so much as the interpreter or the administrator on the one side, and those for whom he acts, the class or the pupil, on the other. Hamlet's cloud, that was like a camel, then like a weasel, then like a whale, was one and the same cloud under all its resemblances.

If we pass to the character of education, as a system, we shall discover, I think, other inducements to take a conservative view.

We find it, in the first place, a preparatory system. It does not profess to be complete or final ; it does not fix a point at which perfection is to be reached, and beyond which there can be no progress, but confesses itself a means and not an end, a process to continue through life just as that of respiration, or any other essential to existence. Have you ever attempted to refer the various projects of educational reformation, or any one of them, to this simple conception of education as it really is, and to determine the soundness or the unsoundness of the proposed reform, according to its acknowledgment or its contradiction of the conception? It is a very easy and a very decisive manner of settling a great variety of educational theories. It does away at once with all over-education, as we commonly understand that term, in other words, with forcing a pupil beyond his strength, or cramming him beyond his digestive powers. It saves the poor infant in the cradle from such treatment as Pestalozzi would have inflicted upon him in making him listen to the words in the spelling-book, "before he can pronounce a single one, so that they may be deeply impressed upon his mind by frequent repetition." It rescues the child of larger growth from being overwhelmed by a mass of studies, as fatal to his intellectual life as the ashes of Vesuvius to the doomed Pompeii. It raises the question, What shall be taught, and what left untaught? That throws us back upon another inquiry, — What is the comparative value of different objects or different methods of knowledge? — an inquiry very much

neglected by educational reformers of all kinds. Here we are led by conservative principles to fix our starting-point. We introduce into education that comparison which has been of inestimable importance in all departments of science ; we bring studies and systems face to face with one another ; we analyze, combine, and make our choice of what we shall teach or learn. It is no slight labor, as we are not long in discovering. The first step, and as it sometimes seems the last, so slow and painful is the movement, so full of momentous issues, that we hardly venture to lift the foot or to set it down. Shall we confine our motions, or extend them? Shall we follow a practical course, as it is termed, and make our "sacred question," in the language of Rousseau, "What is the use of it?" Or shall we move in an opposite direction, and with a sneer at the utilitarianism of the age, turn to whatever is aesthetic or imaginative, as to the only genuine elements of knowledge? These are conflicting courses, and we must decide which of them to follow ; whether it shall be one exclusively, or more than one, if so be we may unite them. But the difficulty of choosing a system is no excuse for choosing none, or for adopting a plan whose lines are drawn at random, and filled in as unsought opportunities allow. "The so-called education," says the head master of Winchester, "which is made up altogether of various heterogeneous pieces of knowledge, none leading on to the others, none carried forward throughout the whole process to give coherency, and to form as it were a backbone to all the

rest, is really no education at all." Another great safeguard in appreciating the preparatory character of education, is this : Knowing that it does not terminate in itself, but that it is the way by which we reach a point beyond it, we grasp after that power which we feel we shall need amid the experiences of life, when teachers, books, and objects no longer work upon the mind more than it works upon them, but when it must prove its strength and test the temper which it has acquired. Montaigne used to say that he liked to forge his mind better than to furnish it ; that is, to make use of his powers rather than to train them. But they must be trained before they can be used, — the mind must be furnished before it can be forged, — and the only way to do it consistently and effectively, is to consider the faculty which we desire to develop, and then develop it, instead of harping upon separate studies or parts of any studies in themselves. It is better to educate the Taste, for example, than simply to teach the elements of Beauty or the principles of Art ; better to educate the Will, than simply to go through text-books of Mental or Moral Philosophy.

But we have not yet reached the actual object of education. The powers which we have supposed it to aim at forming, are not themselves its objects. What then ? For what is it a preparation ? " Education to Happiness," is one of the headings of a thoughtful essay not many years old. " With himself," says the writer, " your pupil is always. How important then it is whether you have given him a

happy or a morbid turn of mind ; whether the current of his life is a clear, wholesome stream, or bitter as Marah. The education to happiness is a possible thing, not to a happiness supposed to rest on enjoyments of any kind, but to one built upon content and resignation. . . . It can be taught. The converse is taught every day, and all day long. . . . A wise teacher having before him the intent to make a happy-minded man of his pupil, will try to lay a groundwork of divine contentment in him." Here we have an object worth laboring for, one to keep our energies in constant action, our sympathies in continual flow ; one to raise the standard of both teacher and pupil ; one to soften and yet to strengthen the relation between them ; one to elevate the whole tone of education and of all concerned in it. I can conceive no sadder sight under the sun than an assemblage of pupils, whatever their age, to whom this object is unknown ; for whom no kindly hand is stretched out, no kindly heart is interested, that they should be led beyond the ordinary exercises of the school or the college, to those fair prospects where a higher spirit than comes of any physical or intellectual training will have space to exert itself ; where daily labors will be crowned with peace, and daily trials soothed with trust. One of the most unhappy sketches in English literature, is Gray's Ode on Eton College, in which he dwells on the suffering and sin towards which its members are all unconsciously hastening.

“Alas! regardless of their doom,
The little victims play;
No sense have they of ills to come,
Nor care beyond to-day;
Yet see how all around 'em wait
The ministers of human fate
And black misfortune's baleful train.
Ah! show them where in ambush stand,
To seize their prey, the murth'rous band,
Ah! tell them, they are men.”

Yes, tell them this; and tell them, besides, what manhood is, where its strength lies, how its faith is to sustain it, how its wisdom is to guard it, amid all vicissitudes; tell them that their lessons in language or science are not the sum of what they have to learn, that the problems of their nature, the doubts to be solved, the infirmities to be repaired, the responsibilities to be borne, the victories to be achieved, tell them that these are the greater mysteries, and that unless they study them and to some extent master them, they are uneducated, however large the laurels wreathed about their brows. This, then, is the sum of the matter, that education is to teach us how to live, and how to live happily; if happily, then usefully, usefully to ourselves, usefully to others; in a word, completely, or as completely as a man can live. “To prepare us for complete living,” says a recent writer, “is the function which education has to discharge.” And what a function it is! What length, and breadth, and depth, and height, to it; what varied relations, what infinite ramifications! It fits us to be scholars, citizens, men; it trains us as sons and fathers; it directs our bodily powers, forms

our mental faculties, helps us to make use of the resources with which we are endowed, lifts us out of ignorance and misery, above corruption and unhappiness, and sets us where we can do our duty, and our whole duty to God and to man. What, now, has reform to do with this? Can it make or unmake the object of education, this one only comprehensive object? It can bring forward other ends, it can insist on other purposes; but do they bear the tests that we should be careful to apply to them? Not until you can invent new ends of life, can you find out new ends of education. For what we live, for that we should be educated; for what we have to do in youth, in manhood, and in old age, for that we should be prepared. Education can but prepare, as we have already seen, and it can prepare but for that end. There is but one, there can be but one, and all the reforms of all the reformers will not make out another.

But you will ask me if it follows from all this that there can be, or that I think there can be no improvements in education? Granting it is strictly a preparatory process, and that its sole aim is to fit us for life, are we to grant, you may say, that it is as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians? Far from it; there is no need in avoiding one extreme to rush into another; there is no justice or wisdom in representing either the character of education as a system, or any of its principles, as inorganic or lifeless. I have pleaded for its stability; I have urged the undesirableness, or rather the impractica-

bility of attempting to do away with either character or principles ; let me now acknowledge and insist upon its flexible adaptations to every different nature and under every different management. It is as elastic as it is enduring ; it is as capable of being extended so as to embrace the widest and most divergent interests, as it is of being restricted to a single point of culture. But the improvements of which education is susceptible, do not undo its character or annihilate its principles ; they are improvements of administration, improvements in the training and influence of the teacher, improvements in the means which he uses, in himself as he uses them, not in the ends for which they are used. What an awful responsibility it is which he assumes ! He grasps these great and immutable laws, he brings all the power of his life and presence to bear upon them, and then he wields them, how nobly, or how ignobly ! how faithfully, or how unfaithfully ! either to the lasting benefit or the lasting injury of those over whom his influence extends. It is his administration that we are to reform if we would be educational reformers ; it is his doings that we are to criticise, his methods to judge, his labors to enlarge or to restrain. Cowper would have administration the test of education, or of a theory or institution of education :

“ I praise a school as Pope a government,
So take my judgment in his language dressed ;
Whate'er is best administered is best.”

We may not go quite so far with the poet, but there is no escaping the conclusion that it is the

educator rather than education which is the proper subject of educational reforms. How infinitely more practical a subject than the other ! As long as we treat of education in its theory, we are dealing with generalities, the adoption or the rejection of which, in themselves, will neither secure a good nor produce a bad effect. But the moment we touch the practice of education, the systems of the teacher, the ways of the school, the plans of school architecture or school furniture, in short the whole course of educational administration, we find ourselves in the midst of details, every one of which is of vital moment to the cause. *De minimis non curat lex*, — the law cares nothing about small matters, — is a maxim that cannot be carried into education. About such matters, education cares a great deal ; and the more it cares for them, the more beneficent its work, the more successful its results. Go into yonder Armory, with its hundreds of operatives and machines ; watch the movements of those great mazes of wheel and bar and drill, observe the supervision of the foreman, the attention of every journeyman to his part in the labor, to the adjustment of every little as well of every great process in the manufacture of the arm, and you see the secret of its efficiency, you understand why it is in demand the world over, and why its proprietor was enabled to build up a town of his own and gather its population to do his bidding. It is the same thing with the school as with the factory ; its fruits depend upon the care with which every part of their production has been directed. Think of

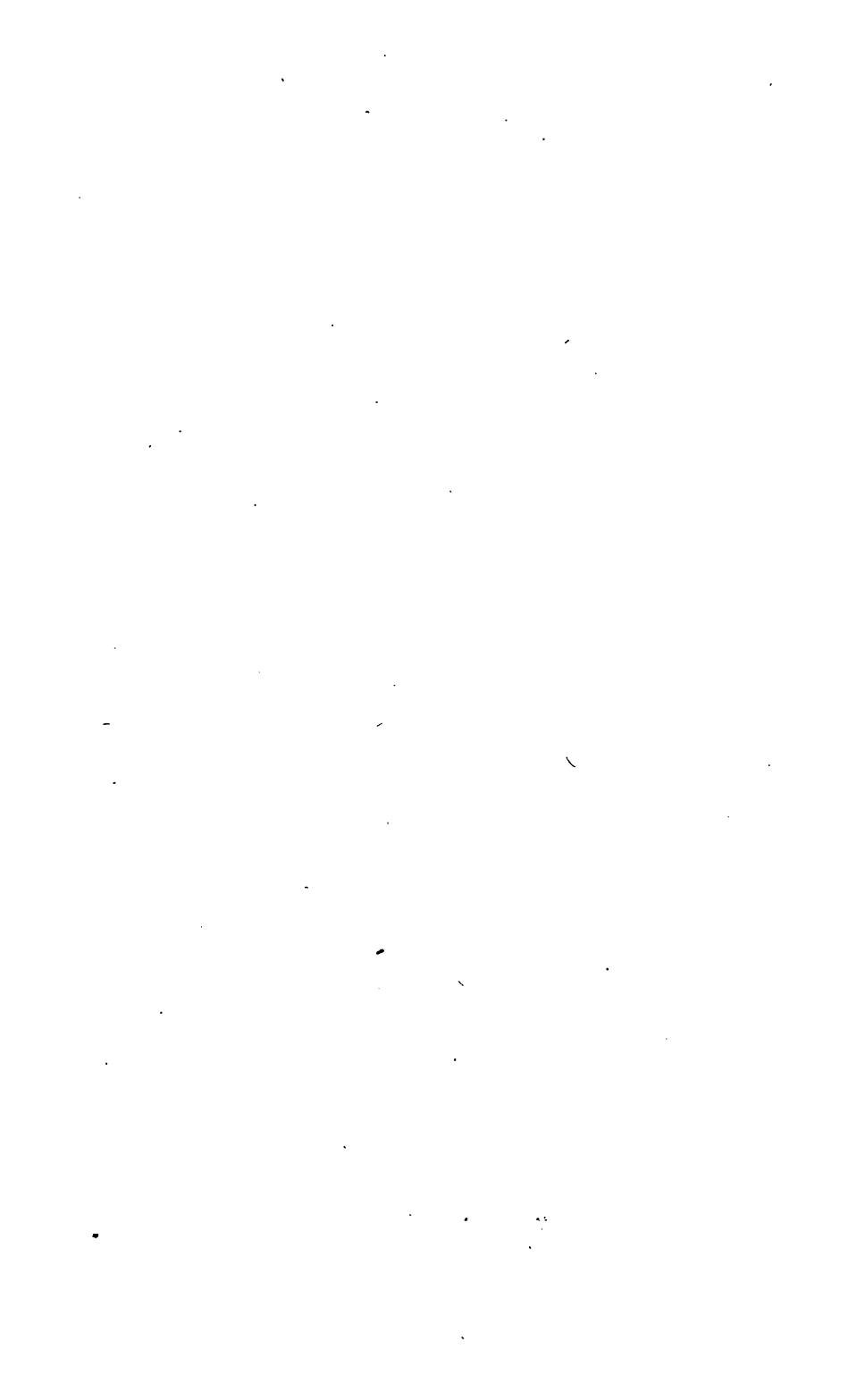
how much is involved in any single detail, such as the teacher's manner of putting a question; how it may encourage or discourage the pupil; bring out what he knows or throw him into confusion, so that he seems to know nothing; bear him as if he were a helpless infant, or lead him as if he were able to walk upright; excite an answer or stifle it, or contain the answer in itself; in short, how it has to do with the daily and hourly efficiency of the school and all its members. Or reflect upon the teacher's example, and its stupendous influence for good or for evil; how he affects the manner and the temper of his pupils without an effort of which he is conscious, except that he must be conscious of exerting or of not exerting himself to do his duty; how his sincerity raises them, or his hypocrisy depresses them; how his industry nerves them to a zeal otherwise incommunicable, how his negligence plunges them into an apathy of which they would never have believed themselves capable but for him. Have you ever met with Sir John Harrington's tribute to Bishop Still, once his tutor at Cambridge, "who," as he says, "hath given me some helps, more hopes, all encouragements, in my best studies; to whom I never came, but I grew more religious; from whom I never went, but I parted better instructed. Of him, therefore, my acquaintance, my friend, my instructor, and last, my diocesan, if I speak much, it were not to be marvelled; if I speak frankly, it is not to be blamed; and though I speak partially, it were to be pardoned." These are words to show the teach-

er's power, to make us examine our own use of it, to open our thoughts and our actions to the light of increasing knowledge and increasing effort. Here conservatism gives way ; here it confesses itself out of place ; here it acknowledges the office of reformation ; and yet here, still here, it pleads that reform may proceed calmly and charitably, that there be no overbearing censure, no overwhelming change, but that the teacher and his administration, with all his deficiencies, may really be reformed rather than removed, really be aided to fill his position with honor, rather than be cast out from it in dishonor. Human nature cannot be changed ; human errors cannot be avoided ; human virtues cannot be perfected ; and we may bear with one another and with ourselves, whatever reformation we may need ; the more patiently we bear and forbear, the more noble and hopeful will be the reformation.

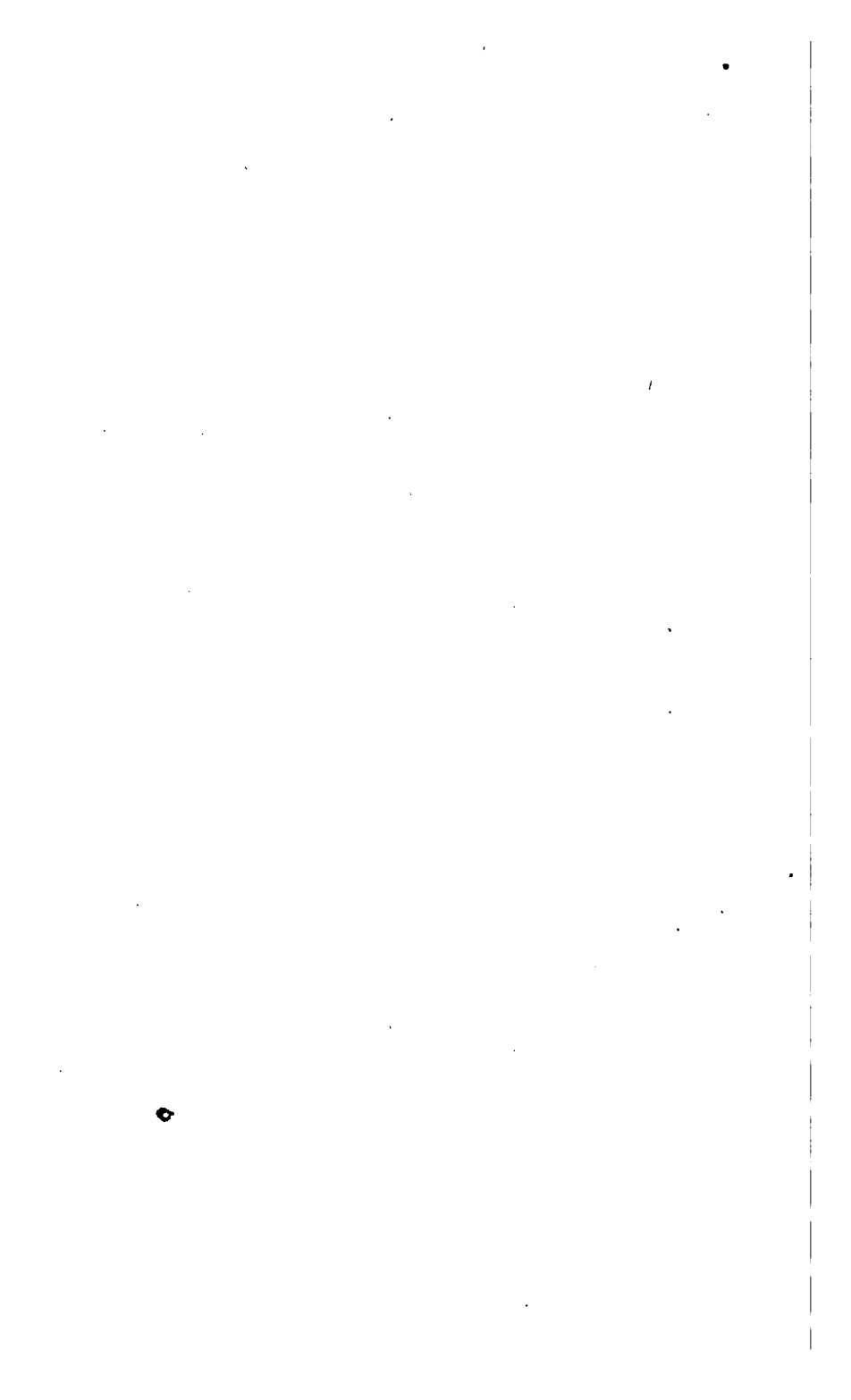
Wherever conservatism admits, as well as where it doubts the advantages of reform, it makes one unvarying stand. It bids the reformer acknowledge the utter impossibility of reaching any point where he can secure perfection, or bring to a positive and ultimate conclusion the enterprise in which he is engaged. Education, as has been already urged, knows no such thing as finality in its processes or its results ; it looks forward, and labors on, and still on, and yet there is no end ; it must exert itself, generation after generation, age after age, and if it corrects an abuse or achieves a triumph, its progress serves to open the way to further and yet further

advances. Shall it sink, and say, Strength fails, and there is no use in striving after the unattainable? Or shall it rather, acknowledging all that can never be attained, gird itself with fresh energy, and go forth conquering and to conquer? Brethren in the common cause, it is for us to answer these questions. It is on us that the present, and if the present, then the future course of education must depend. We are the agents, we the living instrumentalities by which its tendencies are to be directed and its effects secured. If we are so rash as to assail established principles; if we perpetually vary their applications; if we change, or attempt to change, the character of education, its preparatory nature, its ultimate design, then, I think, we shall risk more, far more than we are likely to gain. Let our reforms centre in ourselves, in our spirit, our conduct, our administration of the offices to which we are called; let us summon ourselves to the bar, and put to our own listening and throbbing hearts the one searching question, Art thou faithful?

We live in times when responsibilities of every name and in every profession have assumed a new solemnity. Our nationality threatened, our institutions shaken, our families broken by losses on the battle-field, our children growing up to an inheritance as yet uncertain, what manner of teachers shall we be, what sort of service shall we render to education or to any interest of our country, if we do not turn our eyes with a deeper humility upon ourselves, and with an intenser affection upon the duties which we have to perform?







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